

# St Thomas CofE Primary School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	106465
<b>Local Authority</b>	Wigan
<b>Inspection number</b>	324405
<b>Inspection dates</b>	23–24 March 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Michael Onyon

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	4–11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	237
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	0
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Rev M Greenwood
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mrs J Jones
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	5 June 2006
<b>Date of previous funded early education inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>Date of previous childcare inspection</b>	Not previously inspected
<b>School address</b>	Hodnet Drive Ashton-in-Makerfield Wigan Lancashire WN4 8PQ
<b>Telephone number</b>	01942 201107
<b>Fax number</b>	01942 717824

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional Inspectors.

## Description of the school

This average sized school serves a residential area of mainly owner occupied housing. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is below average. Most pupils are from White British backgrounds with a very small proportion from other heritages. The relative number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is similar to that found in most schools. Early Years Foundation Stage education is provided in the Reception class. The school is accredited with the Healthy Schools and Activemark Gold awards.

## Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

This is a good school with outstanding features. Pupils thrive in its supportive environment. An ethos of self-respect and care for others is central to its happy and effective learning community. This is shown in pupils' good academic progress, in their outstanding personal development and well-being and the excellent care, guidance and support provided. Parents and carers appreciate the emphasis the school places on developing pupils' sense of responsibility towards themselves and others. They see this reflected in pupils' eagerness to attend school, their positive attitudes and their good behaviour.

Pupils' achievement is good. From typical starting points on entry to Reception, pupils progress well in Key Stages 1 and 2 and reach above average standards by the end of Year 6. High quality support and well managed provision ensure that all pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve well in relation to their starting points. Careful tracking of pupils' progress is helping to ensure that achievement is consistent. Expectations are high and areas for improvement are identified and dealt with well. For example, effective action was taken in the last school year to improve the quality of pupils' investigative work in science.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent, guided by the school's strong faith ethos. Pupils are open, honest, friendly and reliable young people, taking on positions of responsibility around school with enthusiasm and contributing outstandingly to the local community with their visits and charitable acts. Pupils have an excellent understanding of how to stay safe and a similar understanding of healthy lifestyles, understanding the importance of taking regular exercise. They are well prepared for the next stage of their education. The school meets current government requirements to promote health and safety, child protection and the safeguarding of pupils.

The quality of teaching is good and helps all pupils to learn and achieve well. Teachers constantly evaluate the good curriculum exploring ways to make it more vibrant and stimulating. The school is in the first year of providing a curriculum that aims to offer opportunities to use skills across a range of subjects. It does not consistently identify clear opportunities for pupils' independent learning. Assessment is thorough. In many classes, pupils receive good feedback on their achievements and progress. Good quality display recognises and shares such achievements with their peers. The marking of pupils' work is good and provides them with clear guidance about what they need to do to improve. Excellent pastoral care ensures that pupils are happy and secure in school. Parents have great confidence in the school. 'The staff and pupils are so friendly and caring' and 'the school has done everything they can to help our children settle in' are typical comments, demonstrating how highly parents value all that the school provides.

Leadership and management are effective and have ensured good provision and increasingly good achievement. The headteacher makes an outstanding contribution in ensuring a clear direction for the school's development, based on raising achievement. Equality of opportunity is promoted well through the school's positive inclusive ethos, effectively eliminating all forms of discrimination. The good progress the school has made since the previous inspection, the involvement of middle leaders and the well informed engagement of governors in self-evaluation suggests that its leadership has a good capacity to make further improvements.

## **Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage**

### **Grade: 2**

Provision is good. Children start school with skills, which are at broadly expected levels. They make good progress and by the end of Reception the majority reach expected levels for their age and some go beyond them. Children come in happily to school each morning, demonstrating independence when hanging up their coats and putting their bags away. They quickly choose activities and play both independently or in a group situation well. Positive attitudes to learning are evident through the way in which children interact with one another while playing in the 'florist shop' in the role of the shop keeper and using their good knowledge of language and number to buy and sell flowers. Staff understand children's learning and development requirements. However, opportunities for children to choose to participate in well-structured learning activities are limited. Choices are often led by adults. As a result, opportunities for children to independently select activities are missed, limiting the amount of progress children can make. Good access to outdoor areas ensures that children have regular opportunities for outdoor play. Links with other providers, and the regular sharing of information are well managed. Good leadership and management ensures that there is a common sense of purpose between all adults who work together to ensure that all children make good progress in their learning and development.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Ensure that planning clearly identifies opportunities across all subjects for pupils to use a range of skills and become independent learners.
- In the Early Years Foundation Stage ensure a better balance between well planned child initiated and teacher-led learning activities.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Standards are above average and achievement is good. Pupils build well on their earlier attainment as they progress through the school. They make successful steps in their learning in Key Stage 1 and acquire the very positive attitudes towards learning, which underpin their good progress. By the end of Year 2, standards are above average in reading, writing and mathematics. The good progress made by pupils continues through Key Stage 2. Results dipped in mathematics and science in 2008, however, a determined focus on building pupils' experimental skills in science has led to a significant improvement. Detailed records show that most pupils, throughout the school, made good progress in the last school year. They also show that pupils in the current Year 6 are on track to reach above average standards in English, mathematics and science. Inspection evidence, including pupils' work and lesson observations, confirms these standards. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress against clear targets in their individual education plans.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 1**

Personal development and well-being is outstanding. Strengths are seen in older pupils' knowledge and understanding of racial equality, enhanced by their work on Martin Luther King and their video conferencing with a school in New Jersey. They understand the need for a healthy balanced diet, and say they enjoy school dinners, which provide them with choices such

as fresh fruit and salad. They have an excellent understanding of the need to keep fit and participate in a number of extra- curricular activities, such as football and basketball. Pupils have an excellent understanding of safe practices, citing safe playgrounds, cycle awareness and internet safety as being important aspects of school life. Their excellent enjoyment of school is reflected in their above average attendance. They refer to their enjoyment in terms of; 'we get to learn lots' and 'lessons are not boring – the teachers have a bit of a joke with us.' Behaviour is good. Pupils make an excellent contribution to the local community through activities such as singing for the elderly and performing in church. Through residential visits and outdoor education, pupils develop good teamwork skills and as one pupil said the skills to, 'be able to help yourself.' These along with their good literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills mean that they are well placed for their life in the future.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Teaching and learning is good overall and is reflected in good achievement and standards. Throughout the school, pupils make good progress and show exemplary attitudes to their work. There is a clear enthusiasm for learning, as evidenced in a Key Stage 1 lesson, where pupils enthusiastically joined in calculation activities. In the best lessons, teachers use interactive whiteboards to good effect. Where pupils make the best progress in their learning, teachers have excellent subject knowledge and make clear the high expectations they have for pupils. Lessons move on at a pace, engaging and motivating all learners. Teachers and teaching assistants have a good knowledge and understanding of pupils' levels of attainment and use this to good effect when planning lessons. In less effective lessons, however, pupils are reliant on the adults in the class and lack the confidence and guidance to learn independently. As a result, the progress pupils make in these lessons is variable. Good support from adults in classrooms ensures that the needs of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are met well.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 2**

The curriculum is good and is developing well to provide good academic opportunities that all pupils enjoy. It uses the local environment well and has evolved with the introduction of a thematic approach to learning that is beginning to capture the interest of all learners. The plans to make links between subjects are in the early stages of development and do not consistently identify opportunities across all subjects for pupils to use skills such as researching and problem solving. Work in lessons is usually well matched to pupils' different abilities and enables them to make good progress. The curriculum is enhanced by a variety of sports and extra-curricular activities. Where there are opportunities for creativity and self-expression pupils' personal development is positively enriched. A strong programme of personal, social and health education contributes well to pupils' impressive personal development. There is an increasing range of activities, including links to a charity in Uganda and learning to speak French, which help pupils to develop their understanding of the wider world and which contribute to community cohesion. The school takes advantage of local opportunities for historical studies and field trips that effectively take learning outside the classroom. The good progress in these areas provide well for the next stage of pupils' education.

## Care, guidance and support

### Grade: 1

Care, guidance and support are outstanding. This is endorsed by an overwhelming majority of parents whose positive comments include, 'everyone is friendly and approachable, and the caring, Christian atmosphere is tangible.' Safeguarding procedures ensure that pupils are free from harm, while meeting current government requirements. Teachers are well supported by a team of welfare assistants and teaching assistants whose work with pupils identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities is commendable. The academic guidance offered to all pupils is excellent. Of particular note are the high quality and rigorous target setting procedures. Pupils really do know their targets and, crucially, what to do to improve their work. This ensures that pupils progress well and is reflected in the good achievement accessed by all pupils.

## Leadership and management

### Grade: 2

The headteacher provides an excellent lead in establishing a clear direction for the school's development. As a result, standards have risen consistently over the last three years. Any changes made have been carefully considered and successfully involve pupils, parents and carers, staff and governors. This reflects the school's good capacity to improve. Staff changes are managed well. Those staff with management responsibilities and the governors know what they need to do to improve the school further. Their challenge is to offer pupils more opportunities for independent learning. All staff have the necessary attitudes and skills to take the school forward and they give good support to the headteacher. Challenging targets drive the school's development. Planning is good, and priorities are appropriate to guide further improvement. The school's self-evaluation is accurate. The monitoring of standards and of the quality of teaching and learning is regular and rigorous. It ensures a common purpose among staff. Provision for community cohesion is good. Equality is promoted well because pupils appreciate the importance of tolerance and understanding between different ethnic groups, cultures and religions. They receive effective teaching about the school's place in the wider community and all forms of discrimination are effectively eliminated. They know about the importance of contributing in the school and wider communities and the importance of understanding global issues.





## Annex A

## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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### Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2

### Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	2
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	2
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	2

<sup>1</sup>Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

## Personal development and well-being

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2

## The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	2
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	2
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

**Annex B****Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Thank you for the warm welcome you gave my colleague and me when we inspected your school. We really enjoyed our visit and the conversations we had with you. As you know, we came to see how well the school is doing and how you are getting on with your learning.

We found that:

- you are being given a good education at St Thomas
- you work hard and reach good standards
- you are taught well. The staff make your lessons interesting and enjoyable and they make sure you have the help and support you need
- you have a good curriculum. It is helping you to develop excellent personal skills and we could see how much you enjoy all your learning activities
- the school is well led and the headteacher and the staff are always on the lookout for ways to make it even better
- the adults in school look after you and care for you extremely well. Your behaviour is good and you are polite and caring young people.

All of this means that your school is a happy place to be. To help make it even better, we have asked that you be given opportunities to use your skills across a range of subjects to help you become independent learners. We have also asked the school to look at ways of providing a better balance between learning activities led by adults and those chosen by the children in Reception.

My very best wishes for the future.